MUSIC AND ART

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THEATERS — MOTION PICTURES

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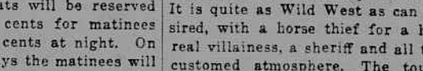
Leita Randall in "Tip Top" IRA D. SCHWARZ PHOTO

Eugene Powers in "The Trial of Joan of Arc"



Helen Payne in "Lady Billy" OLD MASTERS PHOTO

Pat Rooney in "Love Birds" ABBE PHOTO

Julian Eltinge at the Palace ©STRAUSS-PEYTON

Scene from "Its Up to You"

As We Were Saying—

By Heywood Broun

IN "NEMESIS" Augustus Thomas has tried the experiment of writing melodrama to dead march time. It is not successful. Peculiarly enough, Mr. Thomas has availed himself of some of the best known stock figures in the theater, and has then neglected to use the advantages which are inherent in them. Specifically, he deals with a young and beautiful wife, her husband, a middle-aged silk merchant, and a romantic young sculptor. No sooner are these three introduced than the audience realizes, of course, that the sculptor and the young wife are in love and that the middle-aged silk merchant is mad with jealousy. Thomas takes two long acts to tell these facts, just as if a thousand plays have not made them axiomatic.

He dallies before reaching the inevitable murder of the wife not only to get in all the facts of the case with which he deals but to instruct the audience a little, as he goes along, in other useful knowledge. Mr. Thomas thinks, for instance, that psycho-analysis is an interesting field of research, and so he spends not a little time in telling his audience the nature of the new science. He doesn't tell it very accurately, but that is hardly as much a fault as the fact that it doesn't enter into the play in any important way. It is a false clue. For two acts the spectator is led to believe that the play is going to turn on somebody's dreaming of a funeral, or some other vengeful symbol, and being caught at it. Not at all. "Nemesis" is a play about fingerprints. Mr. Thomas gets very much worked up about them before he is done, but those who followed him down the sidetrack about psycho-analysis are likely to have some difficulty in getting back to the main highway again in time to join him in viewing with alarm.

Having found that his wife loves another, Ben Kallan, the middle-aged silk merchant, kills her coldly with a little dagger. Then he takes from his pocket some pieces of rubber on which he has had the fingerprints of Jovaine, the sculptor-lover, printed. By the aid of this device he manages to leave all sorts of incriminating marks about the room. Jovaine is arrested, convicted and executed, whereupon, just to rub in the irony, Kallan tells the District Attorney that he got the wrong man.

Only one act of the four is interesting. Not one of the characters talks with any semblance of reality as long as the play remains in studios and drawing rooms. Once it gets into court, everything is different. Here Thomas abandons his passion for informing people and sticks to his story. The cross-examination of Jovaine is carried out in the closest detail and its very minuteness makes it seem accurate and interesting, as the bright generalizations of the other acts never did. It is also a scene exceedingly well played by Pedro de Cordoba as the unfortunate sculptor and even better by John Craig as the District Attorney. Mr. Thomas exercises commendable restraint in omitting everything which is not essential.

Thus he does not bother to bring the jury in and have the foreman say "Guilty." Having indicated the overwhelming nature of the case against the innocent man on trial, and having let the audience see his discomfiture at the hands of a clever lawyer, Thomas drops the curtain and leaves the rest to your imagination. He might have gone further and have left the last scene to the same legatee. This scene is laid just outside the death house of Sing Sing prison, and it is decidedly unpleasant, particularly as Thomas has hit upon the device of suddenly dimming the current in the light at the door to indicate that now the execution is in progress. It must be said for the dramatist that he has had the courage to carry his theme out to the end without making any concessions to the audience in the matter of last minute reprieves and all that. Most of us are willing to be rolled about in sorrow, gloom and even horror for the sake of lofty tragedy, but "Nemesis" is not good tragedy. It is not even good melodrama. There is no theme in it lofty enough for tragedy. To be sure, it is a play against circumstantial evidence, but whatever vitality may have been in this theme has been exhausted by regiments of dead playwrights and novelists. More specifically, "Nemesis" is an anti-fingerprint play, but this is a subject too special to be of much use as basis for tragedy. Nor can it be said that the case as built actually plants any serious doubts in the mind as to the usefulness of this sort of evidence.

Some further reason must be sought. Perhaps Mr. Thomas has left fingerprints some place, on some old play of which he is now ashamed, or something like that, and has accordingly set out to destroy the validity of all such evidence.

At the Hippodrome

On Tuesday, at the Hippodrome, there will be a celebration of the sixteenth anniversary of the big playhouse, which has become almost a national institution in the minds of the pleasure-loving public. "A Yankee Circus on Mars" was the first spectacle presented by Thompson and Dundy, then the managers of the house and the originators of the idea of that kind of an entertainment housed in that particular sort of theater. Time has justified their belief in the plan. However, it has been under the management of Charles Dillingham that the greatest success of the Hippodrome has been achieved. He inaugurated his régime six years ago by bringing to America Charlotte and her ice ballet, and made Sousa's Band a part of the big spectacle. He presented Pavlowa and her Russian ballet, and Annette Kellermann in sensational diving acts, and has brought European artists of every branch in the amusement line to the Hippodrome for our delight and gratification. In offering the congratulations proper to the occasion the public may well feel itself entitled to a few for having a theatrical manager who so well understands the art of entertainment.

"Mother Eternal" at Casino

Ivan Abramson's film drama, "Mother Eternal," starring Vivian Martin, will open at the Casino Theater, Sunday evening, April 17.

New Plays

WITH the closing of five plays yesterday and the impending exit of a number of others the dark season for theaters on Broadway seems to be at hand. Instead of attractions bidding for theaters, houses are now seeking shows, so there is a temporary relief from the stage shortage. There are indications that Broadway houses will not hold nearly so many attractions this spring and summer as in the same period last year. Most of the minor producers are waiting and the major interests are more or less undecided.

Nine or ten productions have been scheduled by the Shuberts for April, May and June, though just when they will reach Broadway is undetermined. "Blossom Time" is out, but will probably be reserved for fall presentation here. Four musical shows are early Shubert possibilities—"The Whirl of the Town," "The Last Waltz," a revival of "The Belle of New York," and "Quality Street," the Barrie play. They have started "The Silver Fox" with William Faversham, and "First Out" with Jules Hurtig.

A. L. Erlanger has started "Two Little Girls in Blue." For next season's production he has accepted six new plays, including several musical pieces.

"Blue Eyes" has closed at the Shubert Theater, making room for Margaret Anglin, who will appear Tuesday evening in "The Trial of Joan of Arc," which she recently gave at a benefit showing at the Century Theater. Miss Anglin's "Woman of Bronze" gives way at the Frazee to-morow night to Willard Mack's "Smooth as Silk," which has been considerably amended, particular in the first act Madge Kennedy and "Cornered" leave the Astor to Metro's "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." "Mary Rose" has vanished from the Empire, which will be dark for the week, awaiting the engagement of Ethel and John Barrymore in "Claire de Lune." "The Survival of the Fittest" succumbs to the operation of natural selection. It is to be followed at the Greenwich Village Theater by an operetta entitled "A Review of the Classics."

Theaters have been assigned to some of the spring musical shows. The Knickerbocker will receive "June Love" the week after next. "Two Little Girls in Blue" will arrive at the Cohan early in May. "The Last Waltz" is tentatively scheduled for the Century at the conclusion of the run of "The Night

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"The Circle" a Triangle Play For Mrs. Carter and John Drew

THE din of that strife that lately stirred London playgoers over Somerset Maugham's new triangle play, "The Circle," is to be transferred to Broadway. The announcement in the week past that the Selwyns would present Mrs. Leslie Carter and John Drew in this play sent all public welfare workers to the files of London reviewers to read the barometer of the coming storm.

The critics sum it up as a study in cynicism and the unsavory. "Somerset Maugham has not yet made up his quarrel with the world," comments The Daily News. "In all his plays you may find a certain hardness of judgment, which sometimes becomes actual cruelty, and is dramatically expressed by caricature and exaggeration. He hates sham and insincerity, and that hate is a great quality. But he sometimes allows it to warp his plays. This is rather the fault of 'The Circle.'"

The London Times says:

If a young wife finds that she has nothing in common with her prig of a husband and that there is another man who loves her, and whom, she feels, she could love, will she do well to make a "bolt" of it, or not? Well, it all depends, says, in effect, Mr. Maugham. Our happiness depends less on what we do than on what we are. If we are rather frivolous people, like Lady Catherine and Lord Porteus, who made a bolt of it thirty years ago, we shall probably come, as they do, to wish they hadn't. Lady Catherine is not exactly the sort of woman to like being "cut" by nice people. She has now came to dyed hair and a lip-stick. She can call Lord Porteous a brute, and not seldom has occasion so to call him. For him all the romance of the liaison has long been over. He is now simply a testy, crochety old gentleman, who makes himself a nuisance at the bridge table. Yet the pair, if no Darby and Joan, cherish some remnant of the old affection. Really, we think they do pretty well together, whatever they may say. Things might have been worse. We cannot quite regard them as an awful warning to intending bolters.

Yet they seem to think themselves a warning, and offer to act as one, to the young Elizabeth and Edward, who are contemplating a bolt. These are two very simple, direct, frank, young people who have just fallen in love and feel sure of one another. Their declaration scene is one of Mr. Maugham's happiest inventions. There is no kiss. They both deprecate sentiment. Young Edward can say little more than that he is a business man and must be taken seriously. Eliz-

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George Bernard Shaw Punches Cattle

Here are some epigrams from "The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet," George Bernard Shaw's censored cowboy melodrama, which has just been produced in London:

Any fool can hang the wisest man in the country. Nothing he likes better.

When does the Devil catch hold of a man? Not when he's working and not when he's drunk, but when he's idle and sober. Our own natures tell us to drink when we have nothing else to do.

What keeps America to-day the purest of the nations is that when she's not working she's too drunk to hear the voice of the tempter.

I was a good wife. I don't think any woman wants to be a good wife twice in her life. I want some one to be a good husband to me now.

Stage Gossip

THE opening of B. F. Keith's Fordham Theater, at Fordham Road and Valentine Avenue, will take place on Thursday evening, April 14. Besides this regular entertainment there will be an interesting inaugural program, in which prominent citizens and borough officials of the Bronx will participate. The policy of the new theater will be six acts of Keith vaudeville and a first-run photodrama, with the program changed completely twice a week. Seats will be reserved at 15, 20 and 25 cents for matinees and 30, 50 and 75 cents at night. On Sundays and holidays the matinees will be continuous from 1 to 7 p. m. The opening bill will be: Nonette, Clayton and Edwards, Pressler and Klaiss, Paul Decker and company, Miller and Chapman and Karl Emmy's Pets.

E. F. Albee, president of the Keith Circuit, has given his personal attention to this theater, in its construction as well as in other details, and has incorporated many original and novel ideas which will add greatly to the comfort not only of the patrons, but of the actors "backstage." The dressing rooms have individual shower baths attached, there are rugs on the floors, the furnishings include electric irons and dryers and there is a passenger elevator from the stage to the top floor. In the animal room there are baths, food refrigerators, tanks for seals and other aquatic performers, and an aviary for birds.

Corporation papers have been filed at Albany by Carle Carlton, Guy Bolton and Henry Malgren for the Jenny Lind Theater Building Corporation, and plans are being drawn for a theater and sixteen-story building to be erected in the Fifties, near Broadway.

The Hasty Pudding Club of Harvard has chosen a musical comedy, "Westward Ho!" written by Joseph Alger jr. and Denning Duer Miller, both members of the juinor class, for its seventy-fifth annual production. It will be given in New York on April 21 and 22, at the Waldorf-Astoria. The music has been written by Mr. Alger, in collaboration with Alexander Steinert, Howard Elliott jr. and Isidor Strauss 2d.

Leon Errol, despite the fact of his being one of the most important features of "Sally," is personally directing the staging of "Princess Virtue," the musical comedy which Gerald

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Shaw in Leggings

From a Staff Correspondent

LONDON, March 21.—Two Wild West plays have opened in London in the last ten days, and both are proving successful in their melodramatic exposition of the rugged life of America's prairies.

One, "The Savage and the Woman," a four-act melodrama by Arthur Shirley and Ben Landeck, is nightly filling the three thousand seats at the Lyceum. Young Buffalo (Philip Yale Drew) takes the leading part in a production replete with revolver shots, pathos, villains, love and gunmen. One critic called the play "a screenless film," but though it may give the British public a rather hectic impression of the present-day West, it has proved tremendously popular.

The other Wild West play is "The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet," by George Bernard Shaw. Shaw has placed his story among "pioneers of civilization in a territory of America." It is quite as Wild West as can be desired, with a horse thief for a hero, a real villainess, a sheriff and all the accustomed atmosphere. The touch of Shavian morality is ever present, however, and the horse thief, who utters G. B. S. epigrams while waiting to be lynched, is readily identified as the same old Shaw in cowboy's clothing.

"Blanco Posnet" was first produced ten years ago by the Stage Society. The English censor forbade its production again—contending that the play was immoral—and it is not until now that the ban has been lifted. "Blanco Posnet" is now being played at the Everyman Theater, in Hampstead, and is drawing large crowds to see "Shaw's censored play."

It is rather difficult to see just why the censors prevented the showing of the play. It is true that in parts Shaw remarks on the craftiness of God and His pernicious slyness in running after and seizing His own, but despite these little critical familiarities the ultimate conclusions of the story are highly moral.

Superficially, "Blanco Posnet" is a real Wild West melodrama. Blanco has stolen a horse. He is riding away on it, but gives it up to a woman on the prairie who wants to carry her sick child to the doctor. Blanco is captured, and the action of the play centers on his trial and the philosophy he evolves from his downfall due to kindness.

There is a delightful scene when Blanco's brother, a reformed drunkard, pleads with him to live a better life, also eloquently explaining his own success in the world. The brother says:

"You never reflected that when I was drunk I was in a state of innocence. Temptations and bad company and evil thoughts passed by me like the summer wind, as you might say; I was too drunk to notice them. When the money was gone and they fired me out I was fired out like gold out of the furnace, with my character unspoiled and unspotted."

Later Blanco, in turn, explains his own philosophy:

"I'm a fraud and a failure. I started in to be a bad man like the rest of you. . . . I took the broad path because I thought that I was a man, and not a snivelling, canting, turn-the-other-check apprentice angle. . . . They talked Christianity on Sundays, but when they really meant business they told us never to take a blow without giving it back, and to get dollars. . . . but when they told me to live my life so that I could look my fellow man straight in the eye . . . that fetched me."

Blanco decides in the end, however, that it is better to be "soft" and human-hearted than a superman.

Even more vivid, and with an equally good moral, is "The Savage and the Woman." It is the story of a lone waif rescued from a massacre on the prairies and raised by an Indian chief. The boy believes himself an Indian and fears he cannot wed the white girl he loves. Indian Jim, the hero, has a pretty hard time, but in the end the truth is known—that he is the hereditary earl of vast English estates. He is recalled to claim his titles, and marries the girl. Thus all is happiness in the end; but before that end is achieved there are many stirring scenes and much firing of revolvers, and even a trained horse that gnaws the ropes that bind the imprisoned hero and permits him to escape just before being lynched.

Young Buffalo, who plays the leading part, looked out on a packed house last night and said: "It's the real Wild West—and these people certainly love it." They do. A queue half a block long waits each evening for tickets outside the theater; and applause breaks from the galleries each minute during the play. One questions, however, the exact impression that these theatergoers gain of America.

Colored Players in Films

A series of motion pictures featuring colored players will be put forth by the Mount Olympus Distributing Corporation. There are to be twenty-six productions in all, and the pictures will be short subjects, each but one reel in length. The tales will be of the type made popular by Octavus Roy Cohen and Joel Chandler Harris.

Birthday for Mark's Strand

The Strand was the first of the motion picture palaces, and that is only seven years old to-day. Somehow it seems as though they have always been with us, but statistics prove otherwise. A special performance will be given this week at the Forty-eighth Street theater in honor of M. Mark's oldest protégé, the New York Strand.

"Man, Woman, Marriage"

Members of Sheriff David H. Knott's famous "Alimony Club" are to be asked for their expert opinion on Allen Holubar's production, "Man, Woman, Marriage," in which Dorothy Phillips is starred. The picture will be shown to the alimoniates at the Ludlow Street jail some day during the week.